127

There is no electricity in Samawah, although it is connected with telegraph and telephone wires, and lighting is by fuel, gasoline, kerosene, or oil. After nightfall the streets are completely dark, save for a few shops or *chaikhanas* open late and a rare door-lantern burning for visitors, and it is customary for those walking at night to be preceded by a servant with a lantern, or to carry a light themselves.

Water is derived from a spring above the town, that which turns the mill *Asiā Shurjā*, and flows down through the streets in small channels and pipes, frequently bridged or covered with flagstones. British engineers laid pipes connecting a series of three iron pumps to better utilize this water, but the pumps have long ceased to flow and are jokingly attributed by the better educated, such as the teachers, to Harun al-Rashid, the Abbasid caliph to whom a great number of ruined bridges and fortresses are referred by the villagers. In shallow ditches the water follows several routes through the town, sometimes in the open and sometimes through pipes, those of the British and a few segments laid by the townspeople themselves. Most of the larger houses have an interior tank or basin, and pipes, closed during most of the day, lead in from the ditches to these. The Kurds of this area, unlike some of their contemporaries in the Middle East, have definite ideas on what constitutes "clean" water, that which is cold and clear, although they may have no appreciation of its relative purity. Rashid Agha of Jindian, whose father's

sometimes, alcoholic beverages, and light refreshments, such as nuts, bread, and grilled meat. Activity begins at four or five in the afternoon, and, should a card party be in session, may remain open into the early hours of the morning. The rooms and gardens are illuminated with lanterns, and at times an official or officer will have a battery-operated radio for entertainment. Aside from gambling, however, the principle diversion is conversation, the men meeting themselves in little groups according to their preferences. The conversationalists usually depart for their homes between nine and ten o'clock in the evening, one of the servants often accompanying them through the darkened streets with a lantern. Although not normally members, persons of the aristocratic Kurdish class occasionally appear in the club, sitting by themselves or with some official of their acquaintance. It has been related how Seyyid Ahmed and Karim Agha were visitors in the course of an evening, but such appearances are by no means common, nor do the aristocrats indulge in gambling. As has been said, the officials and officers, unless they are Kurds, do not visit the houses of chieftains. No woman is ever seen in the club.

Aside from the month of Ramadan, during which most assume the appearance of piety, the chief entertainments of the higher officials and officers are drinking and gambling. The drinking-party has been described in a previous section, and is usually associated with a game of cards.